



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Thomas Shearer's name has usually been overshadowed by that of his contemporary, Heppelwhite, though Shearer was Heppelwhite's equal if not his superior in the matter of sideboards. To him should be given the credit for originating the serpentine front. He probably made but few chairs, but specialized in sideboards and bookcases, and desks with secret drawers like Sheraton's. His "Designs of Household Furniture," published in 1791, shows a style similar to that of Heppelwhite, but a trifle heavier.

During the Georgian period there were a number of pieces of furniture made by other cabinet-makers that are worthy of attention, notably desks and secretaries and clockcases. Tall clocks were made with both square and broken-arch tops, and often veneered or inlaid. Secretaries and escritoirs developed in similar fashion, first having ball feet, then short cabriole legs with ball-and-claw feet, then ogee or bracket feet, and finally short turned legs of the Adam and Sheraton school. Four-poster beds became lighter and more graceful, those of Heppelwhite being particularly graceful.

Thomas Sheraton, the last of the great Georgians, and in many respects the most artistic, published his "Drawing-Book" in 1793 and produced his designs well into the nineteenth century. His later work was degenerate, but in his best period it was unsurpassed for delicacy, grace of proportion, and restraint. Though less versatile than either Chippendale or Heppelwhite, he was artistically more correct. His style, leaning toward the Louis XVI, shows strongly the Adam influence.

Sheraton loved straight lines and rectangular treatments, and handled them masterfully. His furniture is fragile looking but well made. A distinguishing feature is the tapering leg, usually round, often reeded, and exquisitely shaped. Sheraton was not only an artist in design but a master in the use of woods. He employed satinwood almost as much as mahogany, and also other exotic and native woods. Not a little of his furniture was beautifully decorated with gilding and painting.

Carving was always a secondary matter with Sheraton; form and color were what he sought. He was a master at inlay. Some of his finest work shows classic ornaments and borders in marquetry in sycamore, kingwood, satinwood, and green-stained whitewood on both light and dark mahogany. His carving was always in low relief and included such classic motifs as the urn, vase, lyre, cornucopia, wreath, and musical instruments.

Sheraton used an oval chair back borrowed from Adam, but his typical chair back was rectangular, with the top line broken. Within the frame were various forms of straight-line work, or such carving as the vase or urn. He seldom used the shield-shaped back of Heppelwhite and never the pierced splat of Chippendale.

Sheraton designed a wide variety of furniture, including tables, sideboards, bureaus, ingeniously arranged desks and writing-tables, sofas, slender four-posted bedsteads, exquisite bijou pieces, etc.

With Sheraton the development of English style in furniture properly ends, for after him came confusion, followed by the heavy, graceless forms of the nineteenth century.

## AN IVORY MANDOLIN FROM CHINA

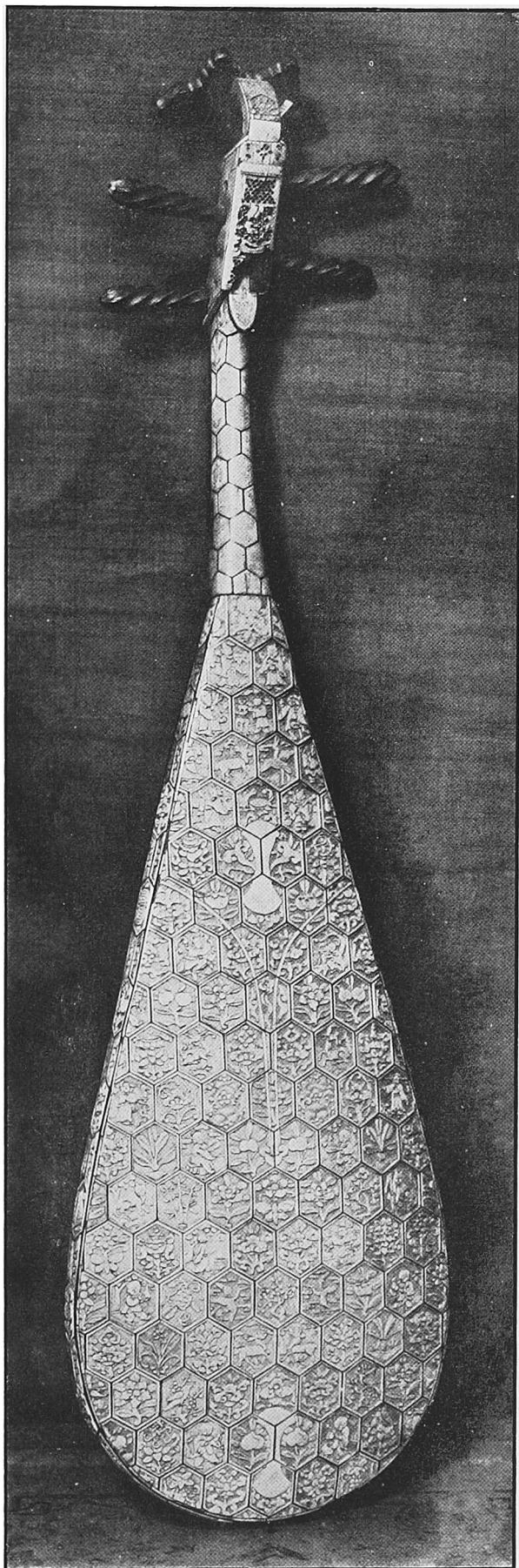
BY CHARLES DE KAY

WHATEVER may be the opinion of American and European musicians regarding Oriental music and the sounds that proceed from Oriental throats and stringed instruments, it is agreed among art-lovers that some at least among Oriental musical instruments are admirable to view and often a joy to gaze upon. Such an object is the mandolin or lute shown on the next page.

The long slender body is in outline a refinement on the tortoise shell which is supposed to have started the long and varied hierarchy of the sounding frames—be they called harp or lyre or gittern—and yet, like many other objects found in China, it retains the suggestion of the tortoise. On the neck the peculiar tortoise hexagons are plainest, because the eye is not drawn aside from the simple design by elaborate carving in low relief as the case is with the body of the piece. It is possible indeed that the handle has a remote recollection of the turtle's head in the curved and delicately carved end where the keys are inserted. Several—how many? centuries old, the instrument really carries the fancy back several thousand years to the peoples about the Mediterranean, the Assyrians, Lydians, Phrygians, Etruscans, who

taught Greeks and Romans the art of encrusting idols and thrones and chariots and musical instruments with ivory.

China always has had the elephant in the south and fossil ivory in the north, so that she has had no need of other races to learn from them its uses. An example like this lute gives the measure of old Chinese feeling—literal feeling or touch in respect to the tactile pleasure that ivory gives the skin, feeling not so realistic for design and outline, feeling in a third sense for color, since age has turned the ivory to a delicious tone. The result is a work of art that appeals to the senses of sight and touch, a piece of artistic cabinet-work that might be a lesson to our makers of musical instruments, if any there be whose minds are open to suggestions of the kind, and a charming little document in the history of Chinese art which will do something to confute those who still resent the granting of a high position to Oriental artists. The man who designed and carved this lute must have been a person of singular quality, and it is a pity that he has not left somewhere about the piece an inscription to tell who he was and for whom he wrought. One might fancy that the piece had been designed—say in the thirteenth



*Courtesy of Mr. W. A. Bahr*

IVORY LUTE OF THE CHINESE MING DYNASTY

century—expressly for some favorite wife of an Emperor. The floral designs in low relief on the hexagonal tablets of which the body of the lute is composed and those that show figures of men, women and children, birds and beasts, have indeed the marks of antiquity about them, but they do not carry any sure signs of a period. They are equivalent to what in European work we call "Gothic" design, at least in a certain naïve rudeness of design and technical carving. At the top near the neck sits the highheaded god of learning; near him on lower hexagons are other figures that may signify other popular heroes or half-gods. Fabulous birds and beasts alternate with actual. We make out a cat and a dog, two boys carrying fruit; even babies are not lacking. One may imagine how interesting a horn-book this back of a "biwa"—to use a Japanese word—must have been to the children of the house where it was used!

The instrument is made of teak wood and between the hexagons of ivory the fine walls, apparently metal, are really polished wood. The front of the instrument is not all ivory-encrusted, only the neck and head, certain plates and the tops of the struts that carry the strings. It has likewise a very shallow body, which may be considered another sign of great age. Among the curious decorations not shown in the reproduction are: a couple of sunken figures carved from the ivory, one of a sparrow in flight, the other of a spider, both in very high relief inside the cavity; also figures engraved in outline on ivory plates similar in method to those that may be detected faintly in the reproduction on the hexagons of the neck. The lattice-work on the back of the head between the keys shown in the illustration is among the most peculiar of all the manifold carvings belonging to this piece. The central panel, instead of being latticed like those above and below, is carved in an irregular fanciful way that forces one to ask its meaning. The carving is reinforced by a black stain applied in fanciful swirls and dots here and there. After examining this for some time, one asks oneself whether this may not be a panel of characters in writing, having to do with the maker or owner of the lute. But they are not like the ordinary Chinese characters at all; still less, the letters used by the Manchus in their alphabetic writing. Here would be a pretty conundrum for a student of Old Chinese to solve!

Before leaving this precious old bit, attention should be called to the two lines in ivory relief that rise from the mid-body and curve gracefully to right and left to meet the teakwood edge of the instrument; also to the two irregular ivory tablets, shaped like the double-edged axes of antique Crete, which appear, one near the top and the other close to the bottom of the lute-back. That those represent some part of the structure of the piece important to its holding together is shown by the fact that the tablets cover and seem half to efface one or more of the carved hexagons.

It may be that this object is only five or six hundred years old; even to last so long it must have had exceptional care taken of it; but its structure, design and workmanship cause one to review the work of much earlier centuries and wonder to how early a Chinese dynasty it might not belong.